



## Phil Cartwright and Fran Roberts

FR: Hello and welcome to this Big Book Festival event. I'm here with Phil Cartwright, author of 'Red Mist: Football's Most Shocking Moments'. Hello, Phil.

PC: Hi.

FR: So for those people watching who may not have read the book, could you give us a brief outline of what the book is all about?

PC: So, basically it's a run down of thirty of the most shocking moments in football, as it says on the tin. Anything from fights on the pitch to incidents in the crowd, moments where players and managers lost their heads and those sort of talking points that people will remember over the past forty or fifty years in football.

FR: And this is your first book project?

PC: That's right, yeah. I've been a sports journalist for about fifteen years now since I came out of University, I've worked in the media industry, firstly in radio and then more recently as an online writer for BBC Sport. But this is the first time I've ever been involved in any sort of book project. I've really enjoyed it, it's great.

FR: I think it's a really interesting concept. I particularly enjoyed the format of the book. I think it makes it really easy to digest. Where did the idea come from?

PC: It wasn't actually from me! It was from one of my former colleagues at University who I used to live with for a couple of years, Wayne Townsend. He's the designer of the book. It came from him really. He'd worked with the Publisher, Hardie Grant, on a couple of other projects



with them, and he sort of pitched the idea of ‘why don’t we do a sports book?’, and that was where the genesis of the idea came from. Knowing me as a willing writer, he got in touch with me and said we’re going to approve the project and would you like to be involved? It just sat at the right time for me. I’d just moved into a new job and I hadn’t been doing as much writing as I had done previously, so it kind of got my creative juices going again a bit. I’ve always wanted to be involved in a book project at some stage so, it sat really nicely for me.

FR: Well you mention there a bit about journalism. Sports is obviously something you’re very passionate about. Did you always see yourself writing a book about sport?

PC: It was always an ambition. When I was a child, even going back as far as primary school, I loved writing about sport. I used to play for a junior football team as a kid and I’d write match reports about those matches. And then English was a favourite subject of mine through school, I loved Creative Writing and as I say, the medium was always the path I wanted to go down and I always thought that maybe one day if it fits in nicely for me then I might think about going off and doing my own project. I didn’t expect it to happen so soon but I’m really glad it did and I’m really pleased with how it turned out.

FR: Now as a sport journalist – this is a slightly different style of writing to what you’re used to, maybe a different feat. How did you go about the writing process, was it something completely different for you?

PC: I think one of the things that really appealed when the format was first explained was that it would really suit my style of writing. I’m really into short stories. As a journalist in media, you’re constantly trying to grab the reader and get all the information out there as quickly as possible. You have to be really disciplined and any guff that’s not needed is always edited out. So you have to be really disciplined. You have to try to tell the story in a certain amount of words, and that can obviously change but... as well as that you also have the different types of writing. So you have the news style, which is very much about the facts, and this is what happened and this is why it happened, whereas also you can go into the more ‘featur-y’ style



where you can be a bit more creative, and I've really enjoyed writing those sorts of pieces in the past. So the format of it really helped me in the sense that I was able to – I was obviously working full time at the same time – it was my own personal project so I was working on it in my own time. It just allowed me to go 'Ok, well I'll do a bit of research after work tonight', and then the next day I'll finish work, well I might be able to write one or two sections tonight. I wasn't getting bogged down in 'I've got to write however many pages of this book,' it was 'Ok, I'll write this one instant and that will do me', and over the course of about three months it took from my first involvement and coming up with the ideas to then going through to the final draft and submitting.

FR: I think what you said there about the process being quite creative, something that's incredibly creative in the book and what makes the book quite unique, is the really incredible illustrations that are littered throughout. They are really, really special, aren't they?

PC: One of the weird things about the book is there's not a photograph in there. Every single incident has been illustrated by Chester Holme, the person who was commissioned to do all of these illustrations and they actually are fantastic, they bring every instant to life. And that was the first thing that I noticed when I first had the first copy of the book delivered to us. It was fantastic just to see – it was so different that it really captured my imagination and brought my words to life. As I say, it was so different to anything else I've ever seen before, and the quality of the illustrations – they're not quite cartoonish but they have that childlike element to them as well – which I think gives them a bit more of a broader appeal too.

FR: They really clearly demonstrate these stories and if you maybe haven't seen those incidents or don't know of them, you can really get an idea of what the impact of them was.

PC: I think one of the things we came up with when we came up with the shortlist was we wanted quite a few incidents that obviously people would be aware of, but also some of the ones that perhaps weren't so well known. So it took a lot of research to try and find those



incidents, obviously. But also those illustrations, as I say, do bring those stories to life that you're perhaps not so aware of. I think they work really, really well.

FR: We've talked quite a lot now about the shortlist, and I think that's really interesting because as you say there are thirty incidents in the book, but as we know lots of red cards in football happen quite a lot. It must have been quite difficult to get that shortlist, and were there incidents that you wanted to put in that maybe didn't make the cut?

PC: Yeah, I think for the first draft we had about fifty. So we came up with separate shortlists – myself and Wayne Townsend who was the designer on the book and it was his original idea – and we came up with this idea of wanting to aim for about thirty because that would be a round number but also manageable in terms of what the book could cope with. So we had this shortlist of initially about fifty but then going through the list afterwards we sort of said well maybe twenty we definitely wanted, and then there were some that sort of went into little sub categories, so for example, one of the sections in the book is about David Beckham's red card for England in the '98 World Cup against Argentina. There have been quite a few noticeable red cards for England over the years, and we thought well rather than doing a section on Wayne Rooney's red card and some of the other red card incidents there have been over the years, why don't we make a smaller subsection with bullet points of some of those incidents. So at the end of each section of the book there are maybe four or five bullet points around different categories. So one of them is about England's red cards and another about noticeable moments from World Cups which perhaps didn't quite make the grade but were worth mentioning. Other ones that were sort of quirky ones which there weren't really a massive amount of information about but which were just nice little tales to tell, they've been collated into a separate section too. I'm really happy with the final shortlist that we came out with, that we were able to include a lot of those stories that didn't quite make the cut.

FR: So you've got those thirty stories that you get the beautiful illustrations with, but a lot of bonus content as well that you can enjoy and maybe use as a few fun facts yourself. So I think



it's time that we do get down to the nitty-gritty. Firstly let's talk about the cover of the book, and of course Zinedine Zidane's famous head-butt in the World Cup.

PC: So this was the main idea that we had – we thought, 'Well, can we find that one incident that everyone's going to remember?' And it was this Zidane incident that I think pretty much everyone who's been following football over the past twenty years will know the story about Zidane, one of the greatest players of his generation, of any generation. He really came to the fore in 1998 when France won their home World Cup, he scored twice in the final against Brazil, in Paris and it was the first time that France had ever won the World Cup. And it was seen as this big cultural moment in France because this cosmopolitan team of different nationalities – Zidane was of Algerian heritage, there were people of African heritage, people born and brought up in France, other players who maybe emigrated from other territories from around the world – and this one group of twenty-odd players came together to win the home World Cup for France. And Zidane was sort of the poster boy of this, having scored twice in the final. He was coming towards the end of his career in 2006. He'd already retired from international football but France weren't doing so well in the qualification period, and for the 2006 World Cup he was persuaded to come out of international retirement and managed to get France to the tournament in Germany in 2006. But he'd certainly thought for a moment, 'this is going to be my swan song, I'm going to retire from football after this'. So it was sort of the end of a great career. Obviously Zidane played a big part in France getting all the way to the final. They had some exciting young players but they were guided by Zidane who was the eldest in the team. He put in some wonderful individual performances in the final against Italy, which was going to be his final game. He gave France the perfect start, scored a penalty, It went all the way to extra time. Italy arrived shortly after Zidane's opening goal and that was the moment where Zidane and the Italian defender Marco Materazzi clashed. Didn't really know what had happened watching on the TV, you just saw Materazzi on the floor clutching his chest and suddenly Zidane was being shown a red card and everyone was going 'what on earth's happened there?' And it was only afterwards when the replays were shown on the TV that it was shown that Zidane had obviously had this contretemps with Materazzi. Materazzi had obviously said something to him, he turned around and just out of nowhere head-butted him



in the chest. There's this iconic image of Zidane walking down a tunnel and the World Cup trophies just on the touchline and he just walked past, he doesn't even glance to his right-hand side. Italy went on to win that World Cup on penalties, there was sort of a mixed reaction in France afterwards. Obviously Zidane had been one of the main reasons for getting them so far in that tournament, so it was a real disappointment that he'd let himself down in this way. But I think in general there was a mixed reaction and a lot of people could see the benefits of what he'd done to that team, and it was just a really sad end to a career really. It shouldn't have ended that way, and I don't think he could easily explain what came over him. Materazzi in interviews afterwards said that he'd made a comment about his sister. Obviously people are going to react to that in the heat of the moment but, as I say, a really sad end to Zidane's career when we should have been remembering some of the great goals he scored and some of those great moments he'd had playing for Juventus, Real Madrid, France.

FR: Like you said it should have been his swan song.

PC: Yeah, but his playing career ended imminently really, so a really sad end.

FR: Not all the incidents are between players. Let's think about another incident earlier on in the book where we have Eric Cantona jumping into the crowd at Crystal Palace.

PC: I remember this really, really vividly. I think I was eight or nine at the time and Manchester United were a great force at that time. Cantona was the main focal point, the main star of that team, he was very enigmatic, he scored some wonder goals that no other player in the Premier League would be able to score. He was that real first Premier League character when the Premier League first started, but he came with a bit of a temperament as well. He'd had a record of getting red cards previously. This one particular night at Crystal Palace in 1995 he got into a bit of a scrap with a Crystal Palace defender, kicked out at him as the ball was being played over the top and he ended up getting sent off for that, for kicking out the player. And he was making his way down towards the tunnel area itself and there were obviously people shouting abuse at him, and he reacted, just out of nowhere turned and launched



himself into the crowd with what's become known as a Kung Fu kick towards one particular fan. Absolutely crazy, he had to be dragged away by some of his teammates. I remember quite clearly actually by just watching the TV on that night, we were just watching the news and it flashed up that this incident had occurred and it was just so weird, nobody had ever seen anything like this before I don't think. It was just so strange a story to follow. In the aftermath obviously everyone clamped down really hard on him, he got banned from his club initially, that was extended to eight months by the FA, so it was a really, really severe punishment dished out by Man United and the FA. There were also criminal proceedings. He was initially sentenced to a couple of weeks in prison but on appeal that was reduced to a suspended sentence and in his press conference afterwards, after the court case, there was this infamous quote that he came out with about seagulls following trawlers because they think sardines are going to be thrown into the sea. There have been many different theories about what he meant by that. I think the most common one is that he thought the media would be swarming around him just waiting for their next story. But that sort of added to the mystery of Cantona who was quite a private person. He came back after he served his ban, came back the following season and helped Manchester United win the double league, played a couple more years and then, symptomatic of the man really, he – out of nowhere – surprised everyone by retiring pretty early and has gone on to have a career as an actor and all sorts of different things. But I think that one moment was the sad moment in Cantona's playing career.

FR: But I suppose the repercussions are completely understandable, you couldn't have lots of players jumping into the crowd at abuse like that, or –

PC: Absolutely. It was just so strange and so different to what anyone else had done in the past. I think the one thing to remember with all of these incidents is that footballers at any stage are under so much pressure. That doesn't excuse some of the things we've talked about already and that I know we're going to talk about, but it does give us a bit of an understanding. I don't know how I'd cope if 30,000 people were shouting abuse at me and about my family, telling me I was a terrible footballer. It's just a really alien situation that only a select few are put into. I think it's even worse now because there's so much scrutiny in terms of TV and the amount of



money that's involved in the game. I've got great admiration for those players that are able to keep their cool. Though there's no excuse for any of these incidents, you can certainly understand why players do lose their cool and do some strange things.

FR: I suppose you can train as much as you want in terms of fitness and skill but that's something you can't really prepare yourself for until you're actually there on the pitch in front of all those people.

PC: Definitely. I know over the past few years there's been a lot more focus on mental coaching and sports psychology. Not just football but all sorts of sports over the past couple of decades are making sure your mind is in the right place, particularly if you go on to take a penalty for penalty shootout, that you're in a clear state of mind to go up and make sure you can go on to score that penalty. Certainly in single-person sports like golf and snooker which can be very repetitive – you're doing that same thing over and over again – you have to get in that bubble where you shut out all outside interference and you're able to concentrate, focus on that moment in hand and that's certainly true in football as well.

FR: We've spoken quite a lot already about the illustrations, but I do want to mention one incident that's really benefited by the illustrations, and that's Cameroon against Argentina in 1990.

PC: This was a real shock really in world football. It was the opening game of the 1990 World Cup. Argentina were the reigning champions, they'd won it four years earlier so they went to Italy as one of the favourites. They also still had Diego Maradona, widely considered one of the greatest players ever. He'd pretty much won the World Cup on his own by common consensus in 1986, so they were one of the favourites going into that tournament and then it transpired that they were coming up against Cameroon in their opening group game. Cameroon in contrast to Argentina were real rank outsiders in this tournament. They had players not many people would have heard of, and they were expected to be canon-fire a little bit, that Argentina would get a fairly comfortable win to start their campaign and that would set them off towards



the final again, but it didn't quite turn out that way. Cameroon shocked everyone, they won the game 1 – 0 and that was, even though they'd finished the game having had two players sent off, it was the second one of those that was the most memorable of the sendings-off. It was coming towards the end of the second half, Argentina still 1 – 0, chasing an equalising goal and they cleared a set piece from their own defence and the ball found its way to Claudio Caniggia who was inside his own half, there were three or four Cameroon defenders trying to prevent this equalising goal going in. Caniggia just weaves his way through and Cameroon obviously decided that the only way they're going to stop Caniggia's run is just to bring him down, see the foul and they can obviously regroup and get all of their defences back. But the first tackle from the first Cameroon defender doesn't quite work, Caniggia just skips through that. The second one is a similar story, the Cameroon defender goes in a little bit harder, not much of an attempt to play the ball, it's just 'we've got to stop this guy at all costs'. Again Caniggia slips past. He's getting towards the edge of the Cameroon penalty area, he'd drawn out a little bit wide, but the Cameroon defender Benjamin Massing basically just comes in and absolutely cleans out Caniggia and the ball is over there somewhere and Caniggia ends up over there. Massing's boot flies off because he's gone into this tackle with so much force. It's just one of those funny moments as if Caniggia was running a gauntlet through these Cameroon defenders, one of them is going to stop him eventually, and eventually it was Massing that did but he ended up getting a red card for that. Just one of these infamous moments, just going back to the illustration it works really well because it's a sequential illustration. One of the things I wrote about was to say that Caniggia went through but he wasn't stopped. On he went. Then he went through his defender. On he went. Then he went through Massing and down he went. It's really nicely illustrated in a sequential sequence of moments to illustrate this really, really bad tackle.

FR: Quite interesting to think about how some of these incidents would be influenced by VAR, obviously we'd have very in-depth replays.

PC: I think that would still have been a red card! I don't think he would have got away with it. As I say the thing that made that one so memorable was because it was part of this wider story



of Cameroon being the world champions. Cameroon had a great World Cup in the end, they got all the way to the quarter final, they were a few minutes away from becoming the first African team to ever get to the last four in the World Cup and they ran into England in the quarter final, they were leading 2 – 1 and England eventually turned that around to go through. But that Cameroon team really captured the hearts of everyone across the world because they really surprised everyone, and I think everyone by the end of that tournament had fallen in love with Cameroon.

FR: Like you say the book's called 'Red Mist', there's a lot about anger, maybe fight incidents but the book doesn't take itself too seriously. You write about an incident between two club mascots that's quite comical.

PC: Yeah, one of the things I wanted to do at the start of this was I didn't want it to be too heavy. I know it's not True Crime or anything too gritty, but at the same time if you're reading stories about challenges or injuries, I didn't want it just to be every story being told the same way. Certainly I was quite keen to get those moments of humour in there. One of the ones I'd pick out would be Paolo Di Canio being sent off for pushing over a referee in the late 90s, that was a really strange incident where he'd got involved in a bit of a melee over two sets of players, done enough to be sent off, and as he was being shown the red card, he pushed the referee in the chest, but it was just so comical the way the referee fell over because he wasn't expecting it. And again as Di Canio was being shepherded away, it was one of the Arsenal players, Nigel Winterburn, who was going across to confront Di Canio to say 'What are you playing at?' As Di Canio turns and squares up to him, Winterburn does this weird sort of recoil away, as though to say 'oh I didn't really want to get involved'. I wouldn't ever condone pushing over an official or a referee but the circumstances around that story lent itself to being a bit more humorous and it was quite a nice redemption story as well because of course Di Canio went on to play with West Ham and became a bit of a club legend there. There was one incident also mentioned in the book where a couple of years after that referee incident he famously caught the ball. There was the Everton goalkeeper who was down injured, it was in the last minutes of a game and West Ham were searching for a winner. And this cross came over and



all Di Cannio had to do was chest it down and put it into an empty net, and he caught it because he thought the goalkeeper was seriously injured. So a couple of years after getting this eleven game ban that he got in the end, he ended up getting a FIFA Fair Play award for his active sportsmanship. So that was one of the moments that lent itself to writing a bit more comically and humorously. Another one was the incident between some of the mascots at City. I'm a Wolves Fan, I've had a season ticket for twenty-odd years now, followed them home and away, and following Wolves this was one of the most surreal moments – there have been a few – but this was one of the most surreal moments of my club over the past few years. I wasn't actually there but it was half time entertainment that was being put on, and obviously clubs have these people in mascots to entertain the kids while there's no football going on. And the Wolves mascot is called Wolfie, imaginatively. For some reason I think there's a double-glazing company or something like that who'd set up camp at Ashton Gate that day. Their mascots were the three little pigs, so you think this could turn a bit nasty given their previous history. So they had this playful penalty shootout at half time and things got a bit nasty, where they ended up having a bit of a melee between the four of them. But it captured the imagination and a lot of news programs ended up covering it in the following couple of days and I think it was on a chat show a couple of years after. Researching the book I got into a bit of a YouTube wormhole at times and I came across this one video where they'd all been reunited on a chat show. They made peace in the end. In terms of writing it for the book it lent itself to be written a bit more like a fable, 'not by the hairs on Wolfie's chinny-chin-chin would he let this opportunity pass to get revenge on the three little pigs' type-thing. Because the subject matter was quite serious for a lot of the time, it was nice to branch out a bit and get a bit of humour in there.

FR: And very importantly is there another book in the pipeline? Is there anything else we can look forward to?

PC: There isn't at this moment. I would like to do another one in the future. One of the things that really lent itself for me being involved in 'Red Mist' in the first place was that it really suited my personal circumstances, and obviously it's a bit difficult at the moment with the current



situation around coronavirus and things like that... other people have other things to be worrying about. I think in future I would like to do that, but it would need to fit in with my other circumstances. Saying that I did really enjoy the process of writing the book. I really enjoyed being creative. And I really enjoyed just being involved in that small-team environment. We had Wayne the designer, Chester who was illustrating and the publisher. Just working in that small team to come out with this final product was great.

FR: We talked quite a lot earlier about the concept of 'Red Mist', and all of these different incidents. Are there any other sports this concept could lend itself to?

PC: I'm sure there is. I'm a huge football fan and when we came up with the shortlist, because football's the main sport in the UK, we were able to just reel off incident after incident and go 'yes, that would be good to get in, that would be good to get in'. Yes, I'm sure if you did a tennis one you'd have plenty of John McEnroe incidents and Boris Becker incidents and Novak Djokovic and all those big names. Those sports where it's very confrontational and it's about being the bigger person, a physical sport, there would be those incidents, I'm sure. I could probably name you seven incidents that would come off the top of my head but it would need a lot more research from me personally. But the format itself would certainly suit other sports.

FR: And you've mentioned already the circumstance that we're in at the moment. Maybe some young sports writers, aspiring journalists, aspiring authors have got a bit more time on their hands. Do you have any top tips for those young people at home who maybe want to use this time creatively? Maybe how to get into writing, a book or as a journalist?

PC: In terms of journalism, I knew really early on that I wanted to go into that area. I just practiced writing, mock stories, I went to Wolves games as a kid and I played in games, so I'd write match reports on my old PC at home. Just getting into that style of writing and just get feedback from people – parents or schoolteachers or whoever. Just practice, practice, practice and make sure you get feedback on where you're going right or wrong and how you can improve. In terms of creative writing, again, if you've got an idea, just go with it. Try things. I



can't tell you the number of times that I started writing things that quickly got deleted because it wasn't quite working. Be experimental, try things, get feedback. I'm sure there will be people willing, especially at the moment with people having a bit of free time perhaps, who'd be willing to read a draft of a short story. The most important thing is just to be experimental and don't be afraid to try things. Don't be afraid to be wrong because not everything will work. Just go for it and don't be afraid to try things.

FR: On that note I think that gives you time to go away and go for it yourselves, have a go at writing your own short stories and brings this to a close. I'd like to thank Phil for his time and for writing such a fantastic book, and let's hope that somewhere along the line there will be another book coming from Phil. Thank you.

PC: Thanks very much.